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THE FELLOWSHIP FIRE COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA, ORGANIZED 1738.

BY JOHN W. JORDAN.

The city of Philadelphia had not been laid out one year before it was visited by a fire, the sufferers being some recently arrived Germans, and for whose relief a subscription was made. As the city grew fires became more frequent through faultily constructed chimneys and the general use of wood for fuel, and Mayor Samuel Preston, in 1711, recommended the purchase of buckets, hooks, and an engine. In December of 1718 the City Council purchased of Abraham Bickley an imported fire-engine for £50. This was the first fire-engine owned by the city. The first "great fire" took place on the night of April 24, 1730, a description of which is printed in Bradford's *American Mercury* of April 30:

On the 24th. inst, between Ten and Eleven at Night, the greatest Fire happen'd in this city that ever has been known here. Some say it began in a Store among Rigging. Several Stores under one long Roof on a Wharf (all belonging to Mr. Fishbourn) were so suddenly in Flames 'twas impossible to save much of the Goods in any of them. From these a vast Pile of Staves took Fire, which increased the Heat there was no coming near. Among other Parcels of Staves and Wooden Buildings were so nigh the Flames that all that End of the Town was in eminent Danger; but the Wind was low. Two Cooper Shops on Kingstreet, at the West End of the Stores flamed surprisingly, communicated the Flames to two new Tenements of Mr. Fishbourn's, one of which is almost entirely consumed; and flying across that narrow Street took Mr. Fishbourn's House that was Cap^t Anthony's; Mr. Plumsted's new House and Mr. Dickinson's large fine Building; all which are reduced to Ashes, except the Brick Walls, some of which and the Chimneys, except Mr. Plumsted's House, which is not wholly destroy'd. Many Gentlemen have lost considerable Quantities of Goods by the Fire and by Thieves: And several other adjacent Buildings have suffer'd. But the Vigilance and Industry of great Numbers of well-disposed People saved Abundance of Goods and valuable Things, and stopt the Flames from spreading further; on which Emergency the greatest Men

in the Town did not disdain to labour very hard with their own Hands. And several of them, with others, have taken this Occasion (for People would not be mov'd at another Time) to make a Collection of Money for a better Engine than what we now have, and for good Buckets. The loss sustained by the late dreadful Fire, amounts to several Thousand Pounds.

This disastrous fire, which at one time threatened the destruction of the southern part of the city, made the whole population realize how inadequate were the apparatus and appliances for the protection of their property from fire. The City Council at once ordered three fire-engines and two hundred leather buckets to be purchased in England, and provided twenty ladders and twenty-five hooks and axes. A year elapsed, however, before two of the engines were received, and by direction of the mayor one was stationed in the yard of the Friends' Meeting-House, Second and Market Streets, the other on the lot of Francis Jones, corner Second and Walnut Streets. The old Bickley engine was stationed in the yard of the Baptist Church, on Second near Arch Street. As late as 1771 only six fire-engines comprised the entire force of the city.

In 1731 Franklin read a paper before his fellows of the Junto Club on the accidents and carelessness by which houses are set on fire, and made preventive recommendations. This gave rise to a project which followed,—of forming an association for the extinguishing of fires and for mutual assistance in removing and securing goods from damage. On December 7, 1736, the Union Fire Company was organized with thirty members, Franklin being of the number.

The second company to organize was the Fellowship Fire Company, on March 1, 1738. The second Minute-Book of this company, from March 7, 1742, to December 4, 1780, is in the library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, from which the following extracts have been copied :

ARTICLES OF THE FELLOWSHIP FIRE COMPANY.

Philadelphia the First Day of the First Month in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty Eight.

We whose Names are hereunto subscribed, reposing special Confidence in each others Friendship Do for the better preserving our Houses Goods and Effects from Fire Mutually agree in manner following, That is to say.

1st. That We each of us at his own proper Charge provide Two Leathern Buckets & Two Bags of good Osnabrigs or wider Linnen whereof each Bag shall contain Four yards at least and shall have a String fastened near the mouth which said Buckets and Bags shall be marked with our names respectively & Company, and shall be applyed to no other use than for preserving our Houses Goods and Effects in case of Fire as aforesaid.

2d. That if any of us shall fail to provide & keep his Buckets & Bags as aforesaid he shall forfeit and pay the sum of Five Shillings for every Bag & Bucket wanting.

3rd. That if any of the Buckets or Bags aforesaid shall be lost or damaged at any Fire, the same shall be supplied & repaired out of the Stock of the Company.

4th. That We will all of us upon hearing of Fire breaking out immediately repair to the same with our Buckets & Bags and there employ our best Endeavours to preserve the House, Goods & Effects of such of us as shall be in danger. And if more than one of us shall happen to be in Danger at the same time We will divide ourselves as near as may be to be equally helpfull. And to prevent suspicious Persons from coming into or carrying any Goods out of such Houses ; Two or more of our Number shall constantly attend at the Doors untill all the Goods and Effects that can be saved shall be carryed to some safe Place to be appointed by the Owner or such of our Company as shall be present ; Where one or more of us shall attend them till they can be conveniently delivered to or secured for the Owner. And if a Fire should happen in the Night Time such of our Company whose Houses may be thought in Danger shall place Candles in every Room to prevent Confusion & that their Friends may be able to give them the more speedy and Effectual Assistance.

5th. That We will meet together in the Evening of the First second Day of the Week in every Month at such Hour & Place as may be agreed on by the Company from Time to Time to consider of what may be further usefull in the Premises, And whatsoever shall be expended at every Meeting shall be paid by the Members met, And if any Member shall neglect to meet as aforesaid he shall forfeit and pay One Shilling And for not meeting once a Quarter shall moreover forfeit & pay Five Shillings.

6th. That we will each of us in our Turns according to the Order of our Subscription serve the Company as Clerk for the Space of One Month, whose Business shall be to Inspect the Condition of each of our

Buckets Bags & List of Names and make Report thereof at every Monthly Meeting, to collect all Fines and Forfeitures accruing by Virtue hereof; to warn every Member of the Time and Place of Meeting on the Day appointed aforesaid at least Three Hours beforehand, And if any New Member be proposed to be admitted or any Alterations to be made in these present Articles he shall inform every Member thereof at the time of Warning And shall if required read over a Copy of these Presents & a List of the Subscribers Names at the Beginning of every Meeting, and shall keep Minutes of the Proceedings of the said Meeting in a Book to be provided for that Purpose at the Expence of the Company, & the said Clerk shall the next day after any Fire | with Two other Members who in their Turns as aforesaid shall be obliged to assist him | endeavour to collect all the Buckets & Bags and send them to the Members respectively to whome they belong, And if the Comp. Ladders should be damaged or left at a Fire, he shall cause them to be repaired & convey'd to the Places where they are usually fixed, And the Expence if any shall be paid out of the Stock of the Company, Which said Clerk shall be accountable to the rest of the Company for and pay to the next Succeeding Clerk, all the Monies accruing or belonging unto the Company by Virtue of these Presents; And if any Member shall refuse or neglect to Serve as Clerk, in his turn as aforesaid or get some other Member to serve in his Stead, he shall forfeit & pay the Sum of Tenn Shillings.

7th. That our Company shall not exceed the Number of Thirty Persons, No New Member to be admitted, No Alterations to be made in these present Articles, nor any Sum of Money above Five Pounds to be disposed of until the Meeting next after the same is first proposed and the whole Company acquainted therewith by the Clerk as aforesaid, nor without the Consent*of Two Thirds of our whole Number, the whole Two Thirds being met. And that all other Affairs relating to the Company shall be determined by Three fourths of the Members met, And that the Time of entering upon Business shall be one Hour after the Time appointed for Meeting as aforesaid.

8th. That each Member shall keep a List of all the Subscribers Names fixed in open View near the Buckets & Bags or forfeit the Sum of One Shilling.

9th. That all Fines & Forfeitures arising by Virtue hereof shall be paid to the Clerk for the Time being for the Use of the Company to be a Common Stock, And if any Member refuse to pay any Fine or Forfeiture aforesaid when demanded his Name shall be razed out and he shall from thenceforth be Excluded the Company.

Lastly. That upon the Death of any of our Company the Survivors shall in Time of Danger as aforesaid be aiding & assisting to the Widow of such Decedent during her Widowhood in the same

manner as if her Husband had been living, She only keeping the Buckets & Bags in repair & causing the Same to be sent to every Fire as aforesaid.

In Witness whereof We have hereunto set our hands the Day and Year first above Written.

Isaac Williams	John Howell
Obadiah Eldridge	Benj ^a Betterton
Jacob Shoemaker	Andrew Bradford
Jonathan Zane	W ^m Callender
William Moode	Joseph Noble
Thomas Hine	Sol. Fussell
Edward Cathrall	Jno Pole
George Sharswood	Abram Mitchell
Moses Hewes	Samuel Powell
John Jones, Jun ^r	Joseph King
John Langdale	William Corry
Thomas Say	Caspar Wistar
Barnaby Barnes	John Wister
John Biddle	David Deshler
Jacob Shoemaker jun ^r	Alex ^r Cruickshank
	Joseph Stiles
	George Hitner
	Jonathan Carmalt.

1742. *March 7.*—Agreed to purchase 12 convenient Baskets at the expence of the Co., and place in the hands of Isaac Williams, Edward Catherall, Jacob Shoemaker, Jonathan Zane, William Callender, Benjamin Betterton, Sol. Fussell, John Pole and Caspar Wistar—that said Baskets be marked, and only used for preserving the goods and effects of such as shall be in danger.

1743. *April 2.*—The death of Thomas Hine reported.

1745.—Four ladders belonging to the company are kept at John Jones, on Chestnut street; Samuel Morris, on Second street; Henry Keppele, on Market street, and widow Wistar, on Market street. Four others are kept at Joseph King, on Water street; John Heads, on Second street; Samuel Morris Jr., on Second street; Reuben Haines, on Market street. Two ladders at Thomas Clifford, on Water street; and in alley adjoining Thomas Morris on Second street.

November 6.—The old articles of association of 1738 were revised, and the following new one added: That the Buckets & Bags so provided be hung near the front door of each of our dwelling houses, & he that neglects to keep them shall forfeit and pay 5 shillings for every Bucket & Bag wanting aforesaid, & each member shall provide a list of all the subscribers names & place it near the Buckets & Bags in open view, on failure of which he shall forfeit and pay one shilling.

These revised articles were signed by the following members:

Isaac Williams	Caleb Carmalt	Obadiah Eldridge
Benjamin Morgan	Jacob Shoemaker	Nathan Zane
Jonathan Zane	Joseph Thomas	William Moode
Thomas Hine	Edward Cathrall	Aquilla Jones
Thomas Say	Uriah Woolman	James Stevens
George Sharswood	Caspar Wistar	Thomas Shoemaker
Reuben Haines	John Lukens	Charles Jervis
John S [?]	Thomas Pryor	Alexander Huston
William Gibbons	Richard Wistar	James Sparks
John Knowles	John Steinmetz	Thomas Clifford
Edward Middleton	Henry Keppele	William Harts-horne
Joseph Dean	Jeremiah Elfreth	George Bartram
William Savery	Samuel Jervis	Thomas Tilbury
Joseph King	William Clark	William Wister
Thomas Calvert	Mordecai Lewis	Samuel Morris Jr.
Samuel Coates	James Wilson	Samuel Powel
Moses Hewes	Sol. Fussell	John Jones Jr
John Pole	John Langdale	Barnaby Barnes
W. Corry	John Biddle	Thomas Morris
Jacob Shoemaker Jr.	John Howell	John Wister
Samuel Bryan	Joseph Baker	David Deshler
Benjamin Better-ton	Alexander Cruickshank	Andrew Bradford
George Hitner	William Callender	Jonathan Carmalt
Joseph Noble	Thomas Myer	Joseph Trotter
J. Morris	Timothy Matlack	Samuel Pancoast

December 12.—Six axes to be purchased and to be marked F. F. Co. on the handles.

1746. October 1.—John Langdale retires from the company owing to his leaving the Province, and makes a present of his buckets to the company.

1747. May 8.—It was proposed to unite with another fire company and procure an engine.

1748. June 6.—The ladder on the Work House wall being much exposed, ordered that it be removed to John Biddle's in Elbow Lane.

November 2.—Proposal to provide ourselves with an engine by subscription.

December 6.—The Union Fire Company proposes that, a committee of two from each fire company be formed for inspecting the condition of all the fire engines and ladders in the city. Isaac Williams and Edward Catherall appointed.

1749. July 2.—Jacob Shoemaker Jr. and Thomas Say appointed to collect funds for a new engine.

August 2.—Collected by Shoemaker and Say, with cash in hand of Clerk £82.9.10, handed to Pole and Callender for Bill of Exchange, to buy a 4th rate fire engine.

Rec^d of Thomas Say & Jacob Shoemaker Jr. the sum of Forty nine pounds eight shillings, subscriptions and Thirty seven pounds one shilling & 10^d Stock money belonging to the Fellowship Fire Comp^y of the city of Philad^a & put into our hands by order of s^d Com^y to purchase a Bill of Exchange to remitt to London for a Fire Engine for the use of s^d Com^y

WILLIAM CALLENDER.

JOHN POLE.

1750. March 7.—We have received of Elias Bland, London, a fourth rate fire engine costing £49.1.3, clear of freight and commissions. Isaac Williams, Edward Cathrall, and William Callender appointed to obtain permission to place the engine near Friends' Meeting, Second and

Market streets, and also to have the name "Fellowship Fire Co." painted on it. Isaac Williams, Timothy Matlack, Jonathan Zane, and Isaac Shoemaker Jr., are to keep the keys to the engine house. A "Tubb" to put leather pipes in, ordered to be purchased.

1751. *June 5.*—The Clerk for the next meeting, to notify the members that they are desired to meet to consider a proposal for insurance of houses. [Caspar Wistar, John Pole, and William Callender were appointed to meet the delegates of other fire companies at the Standard Inn, on Market Street.]

1754. *February 4.*—Admission fee on joining the company £2.

1755. *July 7.*—Notice has been given to provide some other place for our fire engine, and Jonathan Zane, Jacob Shoemaker Jr., Sol. Fussell and John Knowles were appointed to apply to Friends' School Corporation, for the continuance of the place where it stands, and if they do not succeed, to apply to the City Corporation for leave to fix it as near the Court House as may be. Matthew Pratt is to repaint the engine.

1757. *January 3.*—Twenty one members being present, it was agreed that our company meet at Peter Robeson's, until they shall agree to remove elsewhere. [Meetings were held at Robeson's until April; then at Mathias Culp's from April, 1757, to June, 1758, when Robeson's was again selected.]

The Fire Engine belonging to the Company is in a house in Second Street on the Lott belonging to the Friends Meeting, the key may be had of W^m Savery or Charles Jervis or Jacob Shoemaker Jr. The Ladders are: One at Joseph Kings, one near Tho^s Says or S. Morris, one at Widow Wisters, one at John Head's, one at Henry Kipple's, one at Reuben Haines, one at John Jones' Alley, Chestnut Street, one at Samuel Morris Jr., one at Thomas Cliffords.

One Ladder under the eaves of the Butcher's Shambles on

the south side near to the Meat Market—Since placed under the Meat Market. The Branding Iron is at Jos. King's.

1759. December 3.—Reuben Haines, Clerk, reported that members had been notified of place of meeting and the time; that an alarm of fire, which broke out at 7 p.m. and lasted until 2 o'clock, prevented him making the usual monthly inspection of the apparatus, they being chiefly at the fire, where the engine played to admiration, far exceeding all others there.

1764. February 6.—Be it Remembered that this was the Day of the Meeting of the Fellowship Fire Co., but they were prevented from attending as usual occasion, by the Inhabitants being of this City alarmed by the Beckstang [Paxtang] Rioters coming down in a Hostile Manner, nevertheless the condition of the Company's Buckets & Bags were Inspected by John Knowles on behalf of John Corry, and for the foregoing Reason all fines are excused this month.

November 5.—Being Election Day in the County, no fines for absence.

1766. October 10.—Jacob Shoemaker Senr., being an ancient and well respected member of this Company, it is agreed that in the future he be not charged with fines and be at liberty to attend meetings whenever his health will allow.

1767. March 2.—Enoch Story, one of the Deputies from the Union Fire Co., appeared with a proposal for our uniting with the rest of the fire companies of the City, in agreeing upon a proper person to undertake the care of all the engines in the City and keep them at all times in good order. [At the following meeting this was not favorably considered.]

May 4.—Thomas Clifford is desired to enquire of the members of the fire company of Burlington N. J., whether they are willing to exchange their engine for ours, and to examine its size and quality, and if he thinks it will suit us, to enquire terms of exchange. [No report on minutes.]

1767. October 5.—The Company in the future is to meet at the Bull's Head, on Third street, kept by Benjamin Davis.

1772. August 3.—John Lukens, Surveyor General; John

Wister, and Thomas Say, ancient and respectable members resign, with concern to the members. It is hoped that young men may fill their places and not let the Company decline.

FRIEND TILBURY,

August 3, 1772.

As I am about to set out for Reading on Proprietary Business and cannot attend the Fire Company this evening, please to inform them that I decline meeting them any more as a member, of which they are hereby notified.

JNO. LUKENS.

TO THOMAS TILBURY.

1775. *January 2.*—Paper received from other fire companies, requesting a deputation to meet them, to consider a plan for the better supply of water for our fire engines. Thomas Pryor and Thomas Morris appointed delegates.

1776. *May 6.*—Several members stated that they will be under the necessity of removing into the country on account of the alarming situation of Public affairs, and therefore desire the Company to excuse them from all attendance—which being considered by the members present, it is their opinion they should only pay one shilling, for each time absent.

1778. *January 5.*—The British troops having taken possession of the Meat Market, makes it necessary for us to remove the ladder there.

February 2.—William Wister, clerk, the only member present at meeting.

TO THE FELLOWSHIP FIRE CO.,

As I am advanced in years and very infirm, I desire to be excused from meeting any more,

from your Friend

JOSEPH TROTTER.

1780. *December 4.*—[Last entry.] Mordecai Lewis and Samuel Coates reported a new set of articles, which with some alterations agreed to, and the Clerk is directed to purchase a new Minute Book and therein transcribe them, and request the members to meet in order to sign them at the next meeting. Chamless Allen, Patterson Hartshorne and Ebenezer Large applied for membership.